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ABSTRACT

A study interviewed 28 students enrolled in a great books course at Temple University. While interviews did not follow a strict formal pattern, they all covered 4 areas: (1) student interpretations of overall purpose of the course; (2) the influence the course had on the student; (3) which texts were "enjoyable," "difficult" or "engaging"; and (4) how the student saw him- or herself doing in the course. Each interview lasted about an hour. Three patterns of response emerged. First, while the students readily acknowledged the value of the course in terms consistent with the course rationale, they were much less ready to acknowledge its influence on them personally. Second, students simultaneously stressed the need for objectivity in writing about the course texts and the need for representing the self. For them objectivity concerns not simply being neutral but negotiating among personal knowledge, textual knowledge, and teacher expectations. It also concerns ways of speaking, the analytical, secular discourse of the class and the more "expressive" discourse of the self. Third, students repeatedly used spatial metaphors that re-presented them as multiple, even contradictory "selves" in relation to specific texts, to the course, and to their own past and future lives. Elaboration on individual case studies illustrates in detail the conflicting social and cultural positions some student found themselves in when asked to read political, psychological, historical or religious texts. (Contains 10 references.) (TB)

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Resisting Cultural Literacy: Student Re-presentations of Self in a Great Books Course

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Paper given at the Annual Convention of the

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I want to report on the results of an exploratory study that the Temple University Writing Center[1] has conducted of the ways that undergraduates represent to themselves the ideology of cultural literacy, as that ideology is enacted in the curriculum of a two-semester course entitled Intellectual Heritage. Since the publications of *Cultural Literacy* and *Theory and Resistance in Education*, the literature has been replete with discussions of the oppressive nature of the former and the liberating possibilities of the latter. Proponents argue that teaching a set of traditional texts provides the foundation of shared knowledge and values necessary for students to gain entrance into "mainstream" professional and social life. Opponents fear that the price for this participation is students' "deracination." Students must uproot that knowledge and those values they bring with them from their home communities. In short, the debate views students' engagement with canonical texts in oppositional terms, as either promising access to the mainstream or threatening alienation from the home community.

In contrast to these oppositional terms, I want to examine how students in an actual course experience and engage cultural literacy. What we have found so far suggests that the students' experience and engagement are much more complicated than current discussions have allowed. To the extent that becoming culturally literate entails a "re-presentation of self," we found that in the discursive space constructed by the course, students confronted multiple, often conflicting, re-presentations of their social identities. Not surprisingly, students' experience of these conflicts seemed connected to their race, class, ethnic identity, and possibly, sex. What was surprising, at least to us, was how greatly the dynamics of these conflicts varied across the students we interviewed. Whether, and how, we might say students "resisted" the ideology of cultural literacy seemed very much a function of relations among specific texts, the kind of discursive performance that the course expected students to adopt, and students' own history and goals.

At the outset, then, let me stress the tentative nature of the results and the speculative nature of the analysis. In short, today I come to raise questions, not to answer them. Broadly conceived, the study asks three questions:

1. How do students interpret the kinds of reading and writing required of them in Intellectual Heritage 51 and 52? In other words, how do they represent to themselves the expectations?

2. How, if at all, do these interpretations influence ways in which students respond to these assignments in the papers they write?

3. Do these interpretations and responses have any source in students' backgrounds?

[1.1] **Intellectual Heritage as a Textual and Discursive Contact Zone**

Although I am uncomfortable with the current tendency to reify the classroom as a Contact Zone, I do think that the social functions and discursive structure of Temple's Intellectual Heritage program fits the term, especially as it was characterized by Pratt in "Linguistic Utopias." In that article, Pratt characterizes the contact zone as a borderland on the margins of communities, one in which it is conflict and difference that bind, but do not unite, participants. In contrast to the ways that discourse operates within communities, in contact zones, discourse operates

> *across* [emphasis in the original] lines of social differentiation, . . . between dominant and dominated groups, between persons of different and multiple identities. (60)

As I understand her, the metaphor of the contact zone characterizes certain kinds of asymmetrical encounters in which participants reciprocally define, construct, and contest their social relations discursively. In this "textualized" contact zone, what is at issue is the organization of situations, the multiple and contradictory purposes of participants, the speech acts available to participants--in short the very definition of the rights and responsibilities of participants.

Yet, the notion of the contact zone, I suggest, implies that, beyond this discursive interaction, lies important, often non-discursive consequences. Within education, for instance, the institutionally constructed dominant status of teachers authorizes them not only to define what will be considered the discursive "norms" of the situation but also to exact penalties for

infractions of those norms and to reward compliance with them (which is more complicated than conformance --to decide which departures "exploit" the norms and which simply "violate" them). Consequently, because their institutional status defines them as the "dominated," students must weigh their discursive choices carefully. The unwary student may all too easily gain her voice only to lose her hearing. In brief, then, I am joining the metaphor of the contact zone to that of "gatekeeping" developed by Erickson and Shultz and the metaphor of cultural capital developed by Bourdieu. Within educational institutions, contact zones are those institutionally designated sites that function as border checkpoints, if you will, that certify the credentials of those who wish to travel to the heartland of the empire. Within this framework, "resistance" concerns the tactics and strategies that students employ to negotiate the contradictory demands of the credentialing process.

With this description as a frame, then, let me first, situate Intellectual Heritage within Temple University and, second, describe the philosophical and curricular structure of the course. The second largest university in the state, Temple University represents itself as the gateway into the mainstream for urban, first-generation college students, especially those from traditionally underrepresented ethnic and racial groups. True to this representation, the university has enrolled among its 23,000 undergraduates the highest proportion of African-Americans (17%) of any state-related institution in Pennsylvania, as well as high numbers of students from various ethnic/religious groups who are the first members of their families to enter college, and a significant (12%) number of foreign-born students, especially Asian. The large majority of these students come from the Delaware Valley, including Philadelphia, its five surrounding counties, and southern New Jersey. Few of these students come from private schools. Most come from public schools, or from the extensive system of parochial schools maintained by the Roman Catholic Church. Though SAT scores average around 800, the largest number of students graduated in the top 20% of their high school class (class rank is the best predictor of success at Temple). Almost all Temple students graduated in the top half of their class. Not surprisingly, students represent their reasons for coming to college primarily

in economic and professional terms. Even those students who enter as Arts and Sciences majors describe their goals as entering into a secure profession and increasing their earnings over that of their parents.

Given these student demographics and goals, Temple's Intellectual Heritage (IH) sequence functions as both a barrier and an entryway into the economic and professional communities to which our students seek admission, a kind of border checkpoint, if you will. A two-semester, self-described "interdisciplinary course" (Faculty Guide, p. 6), IH is required of all undergraduates (including transfer students) across the university. Part of a 36-credit university-wide core curriculum, the course is usually taken by students in their second and third semesters. Designated Writing Intensive, it is designed to follow immediately upon students' completion of Composition 50, our required first-year writing course. It is pre-requisite to all other W-courses and to many other Core courses. Students must complete each half of the course with a grade of C- or higher.

The rationale for the course explicitly ties it to the perceived need for a common "cultural literacy," at the same time contrasting it to the "typical Western Civ survey."

> The phrase intellectual heritage [emphasis in original] refers to the sources [emphasis in original] of our dominant institutions and ethos, the social mores and values we have collectively embraced and express in our systems of economics, laws and governance, in the mainstream of our arts, literature, politics, philosophy, technology and science, in our justice system, in our conduct of foreign affairs. . . .
>
> IH students read primary texts. . . [C]lassroom focus is on the texts themselves, as objects for questioning and debate that goad students to develop their own analytic and critical skills. . . . The pedagogy we use should empower students to discover the significant themes they [the texts] express and to question unceasingly the values and assumptions in them.

Students are expected to engage both primary texts of the dominant Western tradition and critiques of/ alternatives to those texts, from within the dominant tradition and outside it as well.

Briefly, the syllabus for the two-course sequence works as follows. The first semester is divided into three units--classical Greek Foundations, Religious Foundations, and Humanist Foundations. In each unit, instructors have some options to choose texts. Readings required of all students include *The Republic*, *Aristotle's Poetics*, and *The Oedipus Trilogy*; The Old and New Testaments and *The Koran*; *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo* and *King Lear*. The second semester is comprised of five units--The Enlightenment, The Romantic Critique, Marxism and Socialism, Darwin and Modern Science, Freud and the Challenge to Optimism. Required readings include *The Second Treatise of Government* (Locke); various poems of Blake, Keats, Wordsworth, and Shelley; *The Communist Manifesto*; *Origin of Species*; and *Civilization and its Discontents*. In both semesters, instructors are expected to choose additional readings from a list of approved options. These options constitute the kinds of "critiques" of the dominant tradition represented in the required texts. In the first semester, such options include *The Sundiata* and *The Prince*. The second includes *A Vindication of the Rights of Women; The Wretched of the Earth; Heart of Darkness*.

Clearly, this is not a course that "celebrates diversity." But, it does represent what might be called a textual and discursive Contact Zone. It has an explicit hierarchy of texts that are reciprocally, yet asymmetrically, related to each other as the dominant and (by implication) the dominated. At the same time, the course pedagogy implies a discursive Contact Zone, where the language of critique called for in the course is set against the language of "information giving" presupposed by the course's desire that students acquire a "common cultural content." And, in representing the texts themselves as "cultural artifacts," the course in turn positions students both authoritatively--as archaeologists of these artifacts--and sans power--as the "illiterate," in need of sufficient cultural capital to become citizens.

[1.2] Student Responses in Interviews

Because this was an exploratory study, we did not attempt to generate anything like a representative sample. Participants self-selected.[2] Of the twenty-eight students interviewed, twenty-one were women (11 white, 9 black, 1 Asian), seven were men (4 white, 3 black). Except for one student who had already completed both Intellectual Heritage courses, most students were in IH 52 (16). A majority (19) were in their second year of college with ages ranging from eighteen to twenty-nine; twelve students were nineteen. Thirteen were Psychology majors; twelve other majors were represented. Two of the students were as yet undeclared. All were day students on Main Campus. We purposely did not ask for the name of the instructor; therefore, we know nothing about the instructors' backgrounds.

While interviews did not follow a strict format, all interviews did cover four areas:

(1) Students' interpretations of the overall purpose of the course.

(2) The influence that the course had on them. To what extent, or in what ways, did the reading and writing they did alter their beliefs?

(3) The texts students found to be "difficult" and "enjoyable" or "involving." Did students have preferences for certain texts? Were some texts seen as, in some sense, "alien," or "dangerous?" How did students respond to those texts?

(4) How they saw themselves doing in the course--what grades they had been getting on writing assignments and tests, and what final grade they believed they would receive.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour. In reviewing the tapes of the interviews, we were struck by three patterns of response:

(1) While students readily acknowledged the value of the course in terms consistent with the course rationale, they were much less ready to acknowledge its influence on them personally.

(2) Students simultaneously stressed the need for "objectivity" in writing about the course texts and the need for representing the "self."

(3) Students repeatedly used spatial metaphors that re-presented them as multiple, even contradictory "selves" in relation to specific texts, to the course, and to their own past and future lives.

[1.2.1] The Anxiety of Influence

Students' responses to questions about the overall purpose of the course and the influence of the course seemed inconsistent. When queried about the purpose of the course, students answered straightforwardly, most frequently with phrases such as: "to expand your intellect", "broaden your knowledge", or "to create a more well-rounded person." Several students also thought a central purpose was related to giving people a sense of the continuity of civilization: "Throughout the ages people wanted the same thing," "Things that happened in the past influence us today," or we "understand where we get ideas today." That is, students clearly understood that the purpose of the course was to alter their beliefs and perceptions.

By contrast, when asked about the actual influence of the course, students responded somewhat defensively. Frequently, they would deny any influence and then quickly qualify that denial. A number of students mentioned the *Communist Manifesto*, making statements along the lines of how it helped them look at communism or U. S. society differently (though it was not clear whether students meant the text or the instructor's teaching of it). In general, however, student responses suggested that they were neither expanded, broadened, nor rounded. Yet, on the whole, these were students whose view of the course was positive. With few exceptions, these were students who were doing well in the course. They were glad to have taken it and felt they had learned from it.

[1.2.2] Objectivity and the Need to Insert the Self

Students' responses to questions about their preferences for assigned texts were widely scattered but there seemed to be a tendency to find texts dealing with literature and psychology more enjoyable. The Oedipus cycle and *King Lear* were mentioned most often; Freud also was frequently mentioned here. Given the preponderance of students who were psychology majors, this preference seems understandable. By contrast, texts dealing with

philosophy/politics and religion were found difficult or were disliked. Locke and Plato were mentioned here as were the Koran and the Bible. A number of students mentioned language difficulties with many of the more 'social' texts.

In discussing religious and political texts, students repeatedly invoked a language of spatial imagery to represent the terms of their relationship to the course and to the reading and writing done in it. Typically, the imagery that they used constructed a set of oppositions, oppositions that came into play especially when students were discussing reading and writing they found "difficult." These oppositions, we believe, function to construct a critical space, within which students could simultaneously engage "dangerous" texts and maintain their "personal" beliefs. In what follows, several patterns of spatial imagery emerge and suggest further directions for study.

Perhaps the richest illustration of the use of spatial imagery to represent a student's relation to reading and writing in IH occurs in the interview with 'Doreen'.[3] In Doreen's account of the conflict she felt, two specific examples of spatial imagery stand out: earth/mountaintop and me-now/me-at-thirty-five. Each image positions Doreen in a critical space within which she can re-present herself in relation to the course and engage the conflicts engendered by the course.

A nineteen-year-old first generation Irish-American, Doreen "never thought someone like me would be reading [the] kind of stuff" she finds herself assigned for the Intellectual Heritage courses. She sees herself as a "down-to-earth person" and finds works like John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* ("Locke was a bugger") appropriate reading "for intellectual people off on mountaintops." Nevertheless, she obviously enjoys the course and believes it will make her a more interesting person and potentially be useful "when I'm thirty-five and have to go to a cocktail party...If I ever succeed in anything and have to go to a party where there are a lot of interesting people."

The terms of Doreen's relationship to the course are represented as an asymmetrical opposition. In this conflict, the two sides are represented not as equals but as a specific,

hierarchical relationship, one in which the student Doreen is represented, sometimes by implication, as at the 'bottom', as 'body,' or as a child. By contrast, those to whom this reading rightfully belongs are represented as at the 'top,' as 'mind,' or as 'adults.' To say that there is an asymmetrical relationship is not to imply that Doreen the student is represented as powerless. The imagery suggests, rather, that she can at least imagine a future self who could speak to intellectuals and a place from which to speak.

This asymmetry may enact issues of social class and intellectuality. It is possible that loyalty to 'practicality' over 'intellectuality' reflects something of a working class view on the dangers of schooling that does not translate directly into job skills. It may also be related to general views about the purpose of schooling that sees 'relevance' very narrowly and only in terms of specific career goals. Elsewhere in the interview, the representation of Doreen as a practical 'down-to-earth' person is linked to her having clearly circumscribed intellectual abilities. Though she is doing quite well in the course, Doreen describes herself as an average ("or maybe a little above average") student and comments "I'm no Einstein." Neither of her parents, immigrants from Northern Ireland, completed high school. Speaking of her father, from whom she occasionally seeks advice on writing papers, she notes that she respects him more because "he does not have a Phd hanging on the wall." At this level, Doreen's mention of the 'cocktail party when I'm thirty-five' as a possible site for utilizing the course's lessons may function to warrant her enjoyment of the "impracticality" of the course in terms of its "practical" professional consequences.

In this light, Doreen's discussion of an early experience in elementary school is somewhat revealing. Bored with just copying letters and words she began to see if she could write everything backwards. This behavior apparently induced a strong reaction among her parents and teachers, who feared signs of dyslexia. She recounts the story as an amusing tale, but one senses an early lesson in the dangers of the frivolity of non-practicality. The specter of pathology haunts the world of intellectual extension. Given her oft-repeated protestations of any over-blown conception of her own intellectual abilities, the tale appears as an almost

biblical parable with a moral that there is some 'sickness' present in intellectual activities not directly oriented towards practical goals. That the elementary school experience also involved the spatial reordering of writing is also interesting.

In sum, the spatial imagery seems to function as a way for Doreen to represent social conflicts that arise as she struggles successfully with reading and writing in IH. One way of expressing the conflict might be: If I am now finding myself enjoying reading and writing about intellectual material I formerly considered beyond me what does that say about me and how I am changing? Am I reaching too far intellectually? Will I suddenly find that my family reacts in the way they did when I tried writing backwards?

Similar forms of spatial imagery were common throughout the interviews and suggest a major tool students have devised for dealing with conflict in this course. Students seemed to use this imagery not only as a way to represent conflicts but as a way to engage those conflicts. This was especially true when students were discussing texts or writing assignments they found religiously or philosophically threatening. In these instances, the use of spatial imagery permitted students either to increase or decrease distance between themselves and the texts or to construct a second self who could engage the texts "objectively."

Doreen, for example, educated in Catholic schools and an ardent Irish Catholic nationalist, expressed clearly that she felt conflict about dealing with the religious material in the course. In response to a question about strategies for achieving objectivity in writing, she cited a paper responding to the Sermon on the Mount as her "big test." "In Catholic school if you say 'I love Jesus' you get an 'A'." Her specific strategy for dealing with the "Sermon on the Mount" was mentally to "put the book on the other side of the room and see what it is trying to tell me, not what I am getting out of it."

'Linda,' a white, twenty-nine-year-old non-matriculated Continuing Education student, comes from a family that doesn't like to write because "we're more mechanically, hand-oriented." She also uses spatial imagery in describing how she attempts to deal with the religious texts. In contrast to Doreen, she distances herself by moving herself rather than the

text: "I have to put myself in another place to try to figure out why these people think this way. Also raised Roman Catholic, she has already moved away from those religious beliefs and has problems dealing with the religious texts in the course. She contrasts reading Plato, who "talked about fairness for everybody" with the Bible and Koran, which "just said 'hooray for us'." Catholicism, she feels, "make[s] people feel inferior, bad about themselves." " She finds reading Plato and Joseph Campbell (whose book was used in her section of IH 52) "comforting" because they "don't think so religiously and strictly."

Doreen and Linda both use space here as a device for allowing them to write critically about texts in which they have respectively a positive and a negative emotional stake. In contrast to Doreen who finds a conflict in dealing with the religious texts critically, Linda finds conflict in dealing with religious texts critically. Linda's conflicts revolve around the religious content of some of the texts whereas Doreen's revolve around trying to acquire an effective intellectual methodology to deal with some of the same texts. Both use spatial imagery to name strategies used to overcome the conflict.

'Veronica,' an African-American student, found it difficult to "put myself in a situation that happened in the past," a difficulty that caused problems in responding to Locke and Marx. The Bible was difficult because she "doesn't understand Judaism on a personal level." A certain alienation from the course was evident in her observation that the course " only teaches a certain kind of history...[it does] not really talk about African history. Africans and Afro-Americans had a lot to do about how we think today." For Veronica the problem of 'putting herself in the past' is clearly complicated by her perception that the course itself has excluded an important part of her past. For 'Bill,' language and his fundamentalist Christian beliefs "form a barrier" to understanding the Koran, but in general the course is "expanding" his world and "very few students love it the way I do."

In each instance, students represent their relationships to the reading in terms of constructing and maintaining a critical distance between the self and the text. Doreen puts the book "on the other side of the room" and lets it talk to her. Linda has to 'put herself in another

place' to see how followers of the Bible or Koran think. Veronica, although she feels the need, finds it difficult to put herself 'in a situation that happened in the past'. Bill sees a 'barrier' that his Christian beliefs present in dealing with the Koran, and tries to overcome it.

What differs is the way students use that critical space. Doreen and Linda use it to increase distance between themselves and the texts or the believers in the texts. Veronica and Bill, by contrast, use it to decrease distance between themselves and the texts or the people who wrote it. For Veronica, this attempt is complicated by the fact that she sees herself as invisible in the territory inhabited by the texts. For Bill, the 'barrier' separates him from a text he feels distant from (the Koran) specifically because of a closeness to another text (the Bible). He wants to remove the distance from the Koran while maintaining his relationship with the Bible.

One further use of space occurs in the interview with 'Samantha'. According to Samantha, reading Marx made her "reassociate" herself and look at her own society differently. An eighteen-year-old African American with strong Christian views, Samantha likes the course, although she also has problems with how religious material is handled. She didn't like studying the Koran because she doesn't believe in it and also found Darwin troublesome. She refuses to do papers on texts she "can't be objective on," and she appreciates the fact that the instructor allows a choice of writing assignments. Galileo, however, made her realize "some things science says are true." To the extent that reassociation can be seen as a rearrangement or reconnection of objects in space, Samantha's use of the term in relation to Marx can be seen as an expression of the problem in spatial terms.

Elsewhere in the interview, Samantha conceives of this relationship in terms of "reading critically" versus "taking it personally." It is this kind of reading that seems to be identified with "objectivity," a kind of reading that allows one to "analyze" the material, to find value in it, without surrendering one's own beliefs to it. Still, this approach to reading does not work for all texts. Since 'objectivity' is required in the course, she declines to write about texts she can't be objective about. It is possible that 'reassociating' herself in relation to

the religious texts is a more threatening prospect than in relation to texts that are seen as more social or operating in a separate scientific sphere.

Other spatial imagery is common throughout the interviews. 'Jill' talks about how you shouldn't "stay in your shell" and how the material "helps you come out of it and see different points of view." 'Janice' refers to "formulat[ing] myself back into their time". Responding to a question on style, 'Ruth' refers to a teacher "leav[ing] room for other styles." She is doing well in the course and has generally received "praise" for her writing but thinks people who praise her "have a problem." Samantha's Marx-inspired 'reassociation', Jill's shell, Ruth's appreciation of the teacher's 'leaving room' for other styles, and Bill's 'expanding' world all function to re-present students' experience of the course and of themselves.

[1.3] Conclusions and Issues

Our findings are tentative, but they do suggest some specific directions to pursue:

(1) The metaphor of the "Contact Zone" does seem to characterize students' experience of this course in cultural literacy.

Discursively, students' engagement with Intellectual Heritage represents "borderland encounters" in two distinct, yet related, ways. First, the texts that students encounter--alien, "authoritative," powerful--represent the kind of high culture that Temple students specifically find to be important. Second, the ways of speaking promoted in the class--the use of analysis/argumentation--are also alien, if not outright hegemonic. In response, students consistently talk about being "objective," which seems to have two components. Partly, objectivity concerns, not simply being "neutral" (that's the strategy) but negotiating among personal knowledge, textual knowledge, and teacher expectations. And it concerns negotiating among ways of speaking-- the analytical, secular discourse of the class and the more "expressive" (almost "sermonic") discourse of the self. Texts whose knowledge is deemed either sacred or transgressive (e.g., *Communist Manifesto*) thus represent incredibly complicated encounters for students.

The dynamics of the relations among this course, students' entry into their major/careers, and students' desires concerns the acquisition of cultural literacy as a form of

"cultural capital", the capital here being the acquisition of a socially situated identity--one who simultaneously "knows" certain things and takes up a certain way of speaking about things. But, for students who may want to enter the capital, so to speak, but may not want to abandon what they currently know and their current ways of speaking, they are faced with the kind of contradictory demands described by Pratt in the "Ideology of Speech Act Theory:" as with the administrative assistant who must never interrupt the boss, so he won't look stupid, and who must always interrupt the boss, so he won't look stupid, so too, students must never critique the texts and must always criticize the texts.

(2) In what way might these metaphors be enacted in the texts that students write?

One way to think about how these metaphors may be enacted discursively is that, for students who have strong beliefs about how to read certain texts, the language of "information giving" represents a strategy for addressing the kinds of contradictory subject positions that the students must occupy. In Gricean terms, because they can neither "opt out" of the discussion (at least not without severe penalty) nor claim that they are caught in a "bind" between the demands of the course to "critique" and the demand that they say only what they believe or have evidence for (the Gricean Maxim of Sincerity), students must exploit the maxim of quality (or relevance). That is, they over-elaborate information and under-claim.

Especially with religious texts--those deemed sacred--students seem to be in a situation where conventions of interpretation--facts, evidence, the kinds of arguments to make--are distinctly at odds with those demanded in the course. Doreen represents the exception, here. Attracted by the idea of critiquing sacred texts, she found it difficult to acquire an appropriate strategy. Indeed, teacher comments in response to Doreen's paper on the Sermon on the Mount were consistent with her inability to negotiate coherently conflicts between her political and religious beliefs. By contrast, one of the few students to identify himself as not doing well in the course was also one of the few who did not, it seemed could not, construct any distance between himself and the texts he read or wrote. He criticized the instructor for making any comments on his written opinions or even his writing style.

(3) In what ways, if at all, can students' use of this imagery be characterized as "resistance?"

Since Henry Giroux first introduced the term in 1983, "resistance" has had a long and varied history within composition studies. Certainly, the strategies described here do not fit well into Giroux's discrete categories of accommodation, resistance, and opposition. It may be productive to distinguish between "tactics" and "strategies" of resistance (Sullivan). What I am calling tactics would be forms of resistance that accommodate--they do not question--the discursive rules of the contest. The uses of over-elaboration and underclaiming might be such a tactic in that they exploit the dominant conventions operating in the discourse of the classroom but do not bring in any "outsider" discourses. "Strategies" of resistance would be forms that actively challenge the discursive rule, by inserting discourses usually relegated to students' "home" communities. The stakes become much higher in this case, because the student as writer is asserting a very different kind of authority--an authority over how things may be said and over what can be said. It may be that the student who identified himself as not doing well in the course was attempting such strategies of resistance unsuccessfully.

Further analysis of the textualizing of students' resistance requires that we examine student texts in conjunction with further interviews. In fact, the next part of our project has done exactly that. We have interviewed a smaller number of students while they were taking the course. Each student was interviewed twice, once before they began an assignment and then again once they had finished it. Once we have transcribed the interviews, we will begin our analysis of the texts .

Notes

[1] I want to acknowledge George Dolph, a doctoral student in Sociology, who conducted the interviews and who drafted an initial report on the results of those interviews.

[2] Many heard of the interviews through announcements in IH classes; others saw a sign posted in Weiss Hall; others heard about it through students or through the University Writing Center itself. All participants received $10 at the end of the interview.

[3] All names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

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